Aboriginal Perspectives

A Guide to the Teacher's Toolkit

Teaching Resources and Strategies for
Elementary and Secondary Classrooms

2009

Aboriginal perspectives bring the curriculum to life!

reach every student

Ontario

During a school tour with the principal, visitors hear the deep, steady sound of a drum, and singing, echoing through the hallways. They stop to listen. Where is the sound coming from? What is it?

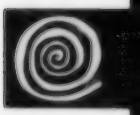
The visitors are drawn towards the gym. As they move closer, they begin to feel the sound in their chests.

In the gym, they see a group of students sitting around a large drum, drumming and singing in unison. Then they watch as the students listen intently to the teacher, who talks about the drum. The class ends with another song.

How can you create such opportunities to actively engage your students in Ontario's curriculum?

The Teacher's Toolkit was designed to help you do just that.

Contents



Welcome to the Teacher's Toolkit! 4

Using the Toolkit 5

How the Toolkit Is Organized 5
Part I: Great Ideas for Teaching and Learning 5
Part II: Practical Teaching Strategies 6

Themes in the Toolkit 7

Aboriginal Peoples and Organizations 7
Culture, Tradition, and Language 8
Cross-Cultural Perspectives 9
Celebration 9
Aboriginal Contributions 10
Current and Historical Issues 11

Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Perspectives autochtones – Guide de la Boîte à outils.*

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

WELCOME TO THE TEACHER'S TOOLKIT!

The Teacher's Toolkit is a new collection of electronic resources from the Ministry of Education to help elementary and secondary teachers bring Aboriginal perspectives into their classrooms. It is available on the ministry's website (see box below). These resources were developed by educators from across Ontario who have expertise in bringing Aboriginal themes and perspectives into the classroom to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

As part of the curriculum review process, expectations, examples, and teacher prompts that focus on First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives are being incorporated into many areas of the elementary and secondary curriculum.

For Aboriginal students, the revised curriculum will help foster a strong sense of identity and a positive self-image.

Where to Find It

The Teacher's Toolkit is located on the ministry's website at: www.edu.gov.on.ca. From the home page, click on "Popular Topics" and select "Aboriginal Education", or go directly to: www.ontario.ca/aboriginaleducation.

For all Ontario students – and educators – these expectations, examples, and prompts add a rich, new dimension to Ontario's curriculum, providing opportunities to explore, understand, and appreciate the contributions of Ontario's Aboriginal communities to the social and cultural fabric of our province.

The Teacher's Toolkit identifies these expectations in the revised curriculum, and provides teaching strategies to enrich teaching and learning. It also provides listings of print and electronic resources that you can use to explore each teaching theme in more depth.

This guide will help you use these new resources. It outlines the organization of the Teacher's Toolkit and the key features of the toolkit's resources, and provides samples of the toolkit's contents.

Aboriginal perspectives bring the curriculum to life!

USING THE TOOLKIT

How the Toolkit Is Organized

The Teacher's Toolkit has two parts:

- Part I provides lists of the expectations in the revised curriculum that contain Aboriginal perspectives.
- Part II consists of teaching strategies related to these expectations that you can put to immediate use in the classroom.

Remember to check the ministry website often. The Teacher's Toolkit is an evolving resource – new teaching themes and strategies will be added to the toolkit as they are developed.

Part I: Great Ideas for Teaching and Learning

This section of the Teacher's Toolkit contains lists of the expectations that have been incorporated into the curriculum to help teachers bring First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, and perspectives into the classroom. The lists are conveniently organized by grade and subject at the elementary level and by subject and grade at the secondary level. The expectations are taken from the revised curriculum documents published as of November 2007. As the curriculum review process continues, the lists will be updated periodically.

Elementary

Relevant overall and specific expectations for Grades 1 to 8 are organized by grade.

Secondary

Relevant overall and specific expectations for the secondary grades are organized by subject. The subjects are:

- business studies
- economics
- English
- geography
- guidance and career education
- history
- law
- politics

Part II: Practical Teaching Strategies

Part II of the toolkit provides teachers with teaching strategies created by experts from across Ontario. Each strategy document contains at least one strategy for helping teachers address one or more of the curriculum expectations that incorporate Aboriginal perspectives. Many of the documents also include cross-curricular connections.

Teaching strategy documents include:

- grade level
- subject and strand
- course code (secondary)
- title of related curriculum policy document
- title and brief description of the teaching strategy or strategies
- specific expectations addressed
- cross-curricular connections (where suitable)
- an "Aboriginal Context" section that provides essential background information
- one or more detailed teaching strategies
- lists of selected resources (print and/or electronic) for additional exploration
- suggestions for making connections with the local Aboriginal community

THEMES IN THE TOOLKIT

Teaching strategy documents in Part II of the Teacher's Toolkit include an "Aboriginal Context" section that provides background information on the topic addressed in the strategy.

The following selection of "Aboriginal Context" sections illustrates the range of themes presented in the Teacher's Toolkit, and serves as a brief introduction to some of the Aboriginal perspectives highlighted in the toolkit.

Aboriginal Peoples and Organizations

Communities in Canada and Ontario

Six geographic areas populated by Aboriginal peoples of common cultures existed in what is now Canada at the time of first contact with Europeans. The areas and examples of the peoples who lived in them are:

- Northwest Coast (e.g., Salish)
- Plateau (e.g., Kootenay)
- Plains (e.g., Blackfoot)
- Sub-Arctic (e.g., Dene)
- Eastern Woodlands (e.g., Anishinabe)
- Arctic (e.g., Inuit)

Related Strategy
Using and Making Maps: Using maps, students explore and compare a North American Aboriginal nation that existed at the time of European contact with an early civilization on another continent. Grade 5.

In Ontario, communities of Aboriginal peoples live in the following regions:

- Southwestern (e.g., Mississaugas of the New Credit, Alderville, Walpole Island)
- Central (e.g., Rama Mnjikaning, Moose Deer Point, Wahta)
- Eastern (e.g., Tyendinaga, Akwesasne)
- Northeastern (e.g., Dokis, Attawapiskat, M'Chigeeng, Beausoleil)
- Northwestern (e.g., Wabigoon, Albany First Nation)

Aboriginal Organizations

The diversity of the Aboriginal population has led to the creation of a wide variety of Aboriginal political and interest groups, including the following:

- the Assembly of First Nations
- the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
- the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- the Métis National Council
- the Native Women's Association of Canada

Related Strategy
Shaping the Political Landscape: Students study the background, aims, and actions of national Aboriginal organizations and their influence on Canadian government policies. Grade 11.

Culture, Tradition, and Language

The Language of the Circle

Circles represent important principles in the Aboriginal worldview and belief systems – namely, interconnectedness, equality, and continuity. According to traditional teaching, the seasonal pattern of life and renewal and the movement of animals and people were continuous, like a circle, which has no beginning and no end. Circles suggest inclusiveness and the lack of a hierarchy. They are found throughout nature – for instance, in the movement of the seasons and the sun's movement from east to west during the day. Circles are also used in the construction of teepees and sweat lodges; and the circular willow hoop, medicine wheel, and dream catcher are powerful symbols.

Related Strategy

Circle Traditions – Talking Circle: Students learn the significance of talking circles for Aboriginal people. They participate in classroom talking circles focused on curriculum-related issues or other issues relevant to them. Grade 1.

Talking circles symbolize completeness and equality. All circle participants' views must be respected and listened to. All comments directly address the question or the issue, not the comments another person has made.

In the circle, an object that symbolizes connectedness to the land – for example, a stick, a stone, or a feather – can be used to facilitate the circle. Only the person holding the "talking stick" has the right to speak. Participants can indicate their desire to speak by raising their hands. Going around the circle systematically gives everyone the opportunity to participate. Silence is also acceptable – any participant can choose not to speak.

Different but Similar

The Algonquian and Iroquoian groups are broad, language-based groups. Within each group, there are a number of different nations. Languages and dialects differ among the nations, depending on their location and traditional knowledge, and their ways of life may also vary slightly.

Related Strategy

Different but Similar – Comparing Algonquian and Iroquoian Nations: Students research and compare key social and cultural characteristics of nations within the Algonquian and Iroquoian groups. Grade 6.

Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Aboriginal and Mainstream Media

In the past, mainstream media have often misrepresented Aboriginal peoples. Media portrayals of Aboriginal peoples (such as the "Wild West Indian", "protesting warrior", and sports team mascots) can sometimes be offensive to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Ontario. Today, Aboriginal people combat stereotypes by creating their own media on radio, on television, and in print. Many Aboriginal media sources, such as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), local Aboriginal community radio stations, and Aboriginal newspapers, attempt to paint an accurate, contemporary picture of Aboriginal peoples.

Related Strategy
Media Portrayal of Aboriginal Peoples: Students research the ways Aboriginal peoples have been portrayed in the mainstream media such as film and television in the past, and compare these with portrayals in the Aboriginal and mainstream media today. Grade 11.

Cultures of New France

It is important for students to realize, when they are comparing and contrasting groups, that cultural groups were not and continue not to be homogeneous entities. First Nation peoples, French settlers, French fur traders, and English fur traders were as diverse within their group as they were cross-culturally.

Related Strategy
Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Students examine similarities and differences in culture, values, goals, and interests within and across Aboriginal, French, and English populations in New France. Grade 7.

Cultural similarities were not the only factors that came into play when different First Nation groups were deciding with whom they would align. Some of the variables included, but were not limited to, geographic proximity, language, lifestyle, the degree to which First Nation groups chose to convert to Christianity, and the degree to which groups saw themselves as useful to one another's goals.

Celebration

National Aboriginal Day

National Aboriginal Day (also called National Aboriginal Solidarity Day) is held on June 21 to honour and celebrate Canada's First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people, and to recognize the important contributions they have made to the country. The establishment of this day of

Related Strategy
Celebrating National Aboriginal Day: Students learn about the importance of National Aboriginal Day and celebrate it with their classmates. Grade 5.

recognition came about after several requests from Aboriginal organizations and was recommended in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. June 21 – the day of the summer solstice and, therefore, the longest day of the year – was chosen because many Aboriginal groups have for generations celebrated their culture and heritage on or around this date. Many Aboriginal groups use the day as a time to celebrate their heritage, and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across the country mark the day in formal and informal ways.

Giving Thanks

In their thanksgiving celebrations, Aboriginal people show gratefulness through prayers of thanks for the abundant gifts and provisions (animals, plants, water, etc.) the Creator has given them.

Related Strategy
Feasts of Thanksgiving: Students explore Aboriginal foods and feast traditions, and make connections between Canadian Thanksgiving and other thanksgiving celebrations. Grade 3.

Aboriginal Contributions

Technology and Invention

People invent and discover technologies to meet their wants and needs. Aboriginal people have made many contributions to Canada and the world through their invention of such things as petroleum jelly, chewing gum, the canoe, and snowshoes, and the growing of corn. Aboriginal people's inventions have allowed them to survive in their environments for centuries.

Related Strategy
What Settlers Learned from Aboriginal People – Technology: Students research an item or a technology invented by Aboriginal people before or during the early settlement period, and compare the older version of the item or technology with the version in use today. Grade 3.

Food Preservation

Every group of people throughout the world has developed ways of storing food for future use. While early hunters and gatherers sometimes enjoyed plentiful and nutritious food, during periods of drought and times when access to food was limited for other reasons, they experienced famine and malnutrition. Gradually they developed preservation techniques that allowed them to store food for use during times when fresh food would not be available.

Related Strategy
What Settlers Learned from Aboriginal People – Food Preservation: Students research how food was preserved and stored by early settlers and Aboriginal people, and share the information in a feature article for a children's magazine. Grade 3.

People learned to preserve food by drying it – a process that allowed them to maintain a stable and varied supply of food. Since dried food is much lighter than fresh food, this preservation method had the added advantages of being ideal for journeys, such as a buffalo hunt, and easier to transport for trading purposes.

Current and Historical Issues

Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

As the original inhabitants of Canada, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people have a variety of Aboriginal and treaty rights, including land rights and the right to maintain their culture. These existing rights are protected by the Constitution Act, 1982. Numerous Aboriginal records (such as wampum belts, oral tradition) and non-Aboriginal documents (such as treaties, acts, laws, proclamations, and agreements) outline Aboriginal peoples' rights in Canada.

Related Strategy
Aboriginal Peoples' Rights in Canada: Students explore the context and history of Aboriginal rights in Canada, and examine current issues and perspectives through research, writing, and discussion. Grade 11.

The rights of Aboriginal peoples have come into conflict with the rights of the non-Aboriginal majority on numerous occasions. There are many instances, both contemporary and historical, in which Aboriginal peoples' rights have been denied (e.g., loss of treaty and Aboriginal rights by Aboriginal women; rights to land, voting, and natural resources).

Geotechnologies and First Nation Issues

Geotechnological information plays an important role for all Canadians in the areas of public health, public safety and security, and the environment and sustainable development. The role of geotechnologies is also becoming increasingly important to First Nation peoples as they negotiate self-government and land claims agreements and develop land and resource management practices that incorporate traditional values. By helping to clarify these issues, geotechnologies are assisting Aboriginal decision makers in their efforts to tackle and resolve them.

Related Strategy
Geotechnologies and First Nation Issues: Students study the role played by geotechnologies in addressing First Nation issues by examining a variety of community projects in Canada. Grade 11.

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